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THE UNIVERSITY AND THE STUDY OF WAR

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
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BY

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THE UNIVERSITY AND THE STUDY OF WAR

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR,

You and those who under your auspices are assembled here to-day can enter, as no other audience could enter, into the feelings with which, as your first Professor of Military History, I address you for the first time. A man for whom the years spent under the influence of this University were the prelude to the battle of life, and who owes to his Oxford training, however imperfectly received, his way of looking at public affairs, now comes back among you with the duty of contributing to the spiritual and intellectual life of Oxford something of what he has learned in the course of a prolonged effort to explore and understand the currents of national energy. The duty laid upon me is at the same time a privilege, for it gives me the opportunity of endeavouring—I will not say to discharge my filial obligation to our generous mother, for which of us could either wish or hope to repay that debt?—but at any rate to prove that I am no thankless child. To you then I can and must speak freely and sincerely, and, sustained by your goodwill, I shall, according to time-honoured tradition, attempt to set forth the scope of the task which I now undertake, and to interpret the purpose of the University in conferring its freedom upon the study of Military History.

Everything, it has been said, depends upon the point

of view. The point of view from which I see our University is that of the nation to which we belong. I conceive of the University as a community of workers for England; and of the service which it performs as consisting in the first place in the maintenance and communication of a spiritual or intellectual standard, and in the second place in the common life which we here share, and which we regard as a preparation for citizenship, as the means by which we train not only the mind but the man. The spirit in which our intellectual work is carried on is set forth in the terse but pregnant terms of the Statute defining the duties of Professors. A Professor is 'to give instruction to students, to assist the pursuit of knowledge, and to contribute to the advancement of it', and he is 'to give assistance to students in their studies by advice, by informal instruction, and otherwise as he may judge to be expedient'. In these clauses, the University recognizes the character of knowledge as something living and growing, rather than as an inorganic, inert, and limited mass; and insists on that vital connexion between the advancement of knowledge and its communication which makes it the first qualification of the teacher that he should be himself a learner. It recognizes further that, to use the words of one of Oxford's great men, 'in the higher regions of instruction it is not the substance of what is communicated, but the act of communication between the older and the younger mind, which is the important matter.'

If, in the twofold service which Oxford renders to the nation, I place first the advancement of learning as the means by which the University becomes a source of ideas which are to permeate and inspire the community, it is because this is the function which qualifies her for

her other duty—that of education. Here she is a labourer in a specific field. I hardly think you will quarrel with me when I assert that the special education which we have to consider here is the training of servants for the nation, a training for citizenship and for that statesmanship which is but citizenship raised to a higher power. If we are to fulfil that mission, we must cherish in our students the qualities in virtue of which they can render service. Our common life should give them an object, their country, and accustom them to do their work with that object in view. The purpose of our instruction is to communicate to them the power of seeing things as they are, which is synonymous with science or true knowledge. So long as our University can send out her young men thus prepared and inspired for citizenship, so long will she be a faithful servant—or, if you prefer another name, a leader—of this nation.

There has been in this country for some time past a certain despondency; many people have come to think that England is standing still while other nations are moving on and leaving her behind; and there are some who seem to think that Oxford herself is stationary, if not stagnant. I have to submit to you a more hopeful view, to give you reasons for faith in our country, and for the belief that Oxford still is, and will continue to be, a spring of thought and a source of action.

Forty-four years ago we were told that the business of criticism was 'to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known to create a current of true and fresh ideas'. The effort thus described has been carried on not only elsewhere but here also. Men trained in the spirit of that effort have been spread abroad through these islands, and through the British Empire. As a result

of their labours, the people of this country have lost the self-complacency that marked the middle of the Victorian age. They have measured themselves, the nation and its institutions, by higher standards. This is the cause of the dissatisfaction which is so widespread and so profound. It is the dissatisfaction not of despair but of the resolve to approximate, as far as is compatible with human imperfection, to the better ideals that have been set up.

In this healthy process of self-criticism, or of the expansion of ideals, Oxford has her part, due not only to her national environment, but also to the continuity of her own labours. It used to be, and I fancy still is, the characteristic feature of Oxford studies that their main current runs in the humanities. We learn from our Greek teachers to regard the State as the medium of human life, to believe its purpose to be the sustenance of a good life, its fruit and justification the creation of a noble type of character to be impressed upon all its citizens. Our effort to see things as they really are compels us to be ever considering the State in all its varying relations, so that our conception may correspond with the living growth of human society. But life and growth are prior to reflection, and speculative thought necessarily follows after rather than precedes the facts; and thus our political thinking follows after rather than precedes the phenomena of English national life, though we may hope that our attempts at analysis and synthesis may lead to fresh and true ideas, to be afterwards with beneficial effect diffused through the community.

Among the impulses of this national life which have marked the last fifty years is one which has only comparatively recently made itself felt in the region

of political consciousness or theory, the renewal of the perception that the State has external relations which may take the form of conflict. Our political thinkers have slowly and reluctantly become aware of a change in their views of the nature of peace, which is at length seen to be insufficiently accounted for by the absence of energy, and suspected to consist rather in an equilibrium than in an absence of forces. The system of states, of which we have long thought as purely European, but which in our own day has revealed itself as world-wide in extent, is seen to owe the existence of such equipoise as it possesses rather to the constant operation of a multitude of counteracting pressures than to a universal inertia. It is beginning to be felt that a theory of the State which regards it purely from within, as something existing isolated in space with no external relations, must be supplemented and corrected by a theory of the relations between States, and of the place of physical forces in those relations. The people of England have gradually come to see that war is a part of the real world, and that the idea of the State cannot be fully comprehended without a knowledge of the principles of international statics and dynamics.

This perception has followed, not preceded, the spontaneous movement of the national life, of which the first expression was the Volunteer movement in 1859, the second the agitations of 1888 and of 1894 for the expansion of the Navy. Both these movements were followed by an impulse towards the study of war, which was strengthened by the chief events of contemporary history—the great Civil War in the United States, the conflicts between Prussia and Austria, and between United Germany and the Third French Empire. The Volunteer movement made itself felt in Oxford,

though it hardly became an integral part of the life of the University. Here and there a student was attracted to inquire into the phenomena of war and into the history of wars ; a not very large number of young men received a slight initiation into the military life ; a still smaller number associated themselves for tactical exercises in the shape of the Kriegspiel or War-game. At the time when this took place, about 1875, English military literature of permanent value was represented almost entirely by the work of Sir Edward Hamley. Modern English naval literature had not then come into existence. It was not till 1883 that a Chichele Professor of Modern History published a life of Lord Hawke, which preceded the Treatise on Naval Warfare written by the late Admiral Philip Colomb, himself the disciple of his greater brother, the late Sir John Colomb.

The crisis of the South African War at length brought home to the people of this country the reality of a phenomenon they had too long ignored. This produced an awakening effect upon Oxford, and in particular upon All Souls College, which had some years before specially dedicated itself to the service of the University, with the result which I have already suggested as the natural accompaniment of such dedication. Two Fellows of All Souls independently undertook to write the history of that war ; and, soon after the pacification, the University began to take its share in the national effort towards military reorganization. A number of commissions in the Army were thrown open under certain conditions to graduates of the Universities, Oxford admitted the subject of Military History as a special subject for candidates for Honours in the School of Modern History, and in 1905 the University, in conse-

quence of the gift of a private donor, established a Lecturership in that subject. The chosen Lecturer, Sir Foster Cunliffe, set the example both to his students and successors of diligent and unwearied research, especially into the great campaigns of Napoleon. It was his endeavour to make military history teach war by the full and accurate ascertainment of the facts from the contemporary documents so far as by industry and perseverance they could be made available. In the course of last Term, All Souls College submitted to the University a proposal that the Lecturership should be transformed into a Professorship, and the sanction of the University enabled that intention to be realized. Thus the University has bestowed its full franchise upon the study of war. The foundation of the Chair then, so far from being a fortuitous event, is the direct outcome of that close contact which has long existed, and which from year to year becomes more intimate, between Oxford and the national life of England.

After the sketch I have given you of the origin of the Chair there is no need to dwell at much length upon its necessity, its logical justification. Yet it may be well to remind ourselves that we can no longer think of the University as capable of doing its duty without having in its scheme of work a place for the study of war.

Our first business is what the Greeks called *θεωρία*, seeing things as they are. We must get our vision of the actual world into accordance with the facts, before we can profitably attempt to dream of a better world.

One of our main occupations here is with the life of mankind, which is realized only in political communities or states. In our school of *Literae Humaniores* we

study the idea of the State; in our schools of History the life and growth of states. It is to this part of the University's work that the study of war belongs. For war is one of the modes of human intercourse. It is the form assumed by the conflict between communities of men, the shape assumed by the acuter stages of the struggle between states. A study of the State or of states that should omit to examine war must needs be crippled and defective. It would be like a study of the ship which should take no account of the sea. An ethics or a politics which failed to analyse the nature and meaning of the conflict of wills and of the collision between states would be an ethics and a politics out of touch with the real world in which we live.

We are thus bound to study war if we are to cultivate true ideas or to advance a healthy learning. And, if we are to turn out citizens or statesmen equipped for their functions in the actual State, we are bound to teach the nature of war.

The first and most important of all the facts in regard to war is that in its inception, in its course, and in its conclusion, the control and direction of a war, or of the activity of a state in and in regard to war, is the function primarily of the statesman rather than of the soldier, and that in regard to war the architectonic art is policy or politics, not strategy or generalship, which is not the master but the servant. This is the very first of the principles which constitute what is called the Art of War. If we use the word policy as a name for the personified intelligence and will of the State, then, says the military historian, it is the business of policy on every occasion to decide whether or not the State shall engage in conflict with another state, and to base that decision upon a true estimate of the nature of the

probable conflict, of the risks and exertions to be undertaken, and of the evils which may be incurred either by shrinking from a necessary struggle, or by entering into one which is unnecessary. Evidently, if this choice is to be rightly made, the statesman must be acquainted with war; he need not be a master of the art, he need not himself be able to handle fleets or armies; but he ought to have a true knowledge of what can and what cannot be done by those instruments, and of the way in which their use or misuse will react upon the well-being of the community which puts its trust in him.

This being the case, a University which ignored war could hardly be a good school for those who may become statesmen. By the adoption of democratic forms of government, by the acceptance of the representative system with all its consequences, the British State has been popularized or nationalized. To it therefore applies a saying which I recollect from one of the lectures of my master, William Wallace, whose untimely loss those of you who were his contemporaries here so deeply deplore. After quoting the words of Plato, that, if the State was to be what it ought to be, philosophers must be its rulers, Wallace said: 'The reply of the modern spirit is that the people must and shall become philosophers.'

So much by way of demonstration of the necessity to the University of the study of Military History. Before I can submit to you a view of its aim and scope within the sphere of the University, I must give a brief account of the view of its nature which results from the labours of two or three generations of military historians.

Military History is the effort to understand war, to get to know what war is and what it means. There

is no method of getting to know war except the study of wars, and the only wars that can be studied are either wars that have happened and are over, or a war that is taking place. But a war that is taking place cannot be fully known. While it lasts, no one whatever can be fully acquainted with it. Neither of the Commanders-in-Chief know more than a fraction of what his enemy is thinking and doing, and no one except a Commander-in-Chief and those in his intimate confidence is aware of more than a portion of what is passing in the army to which he belongs or with which he is in communication.

Accordingly, if we wish to study a war and to get to know exactly what happened in it, we have to wait until after its close, when the reasons for secrecy have ceased to exist, when both sides have become willing to let the facts be known, and when the principal actors have recorded so much as they are able or willing to divulge of their experience. This time does not come as a rule until long after the events, for neither governments nor individuals are very ready to let the world know all their motives, or to have their conduct fully laid bare and open to discussion. Reasons of state, considerations of friendship and of regard for the reputation of distinguished men, tend to postpone as long as possible the disclosure of the exact truth, which in some cases never becomes known.

For these reasons, full and trustworthy knowledge of any war is obtainable only as the result of that prolonged and patient research to which we give the name of History.

If we wish to know what war is in itself, what it means for us, for our nation, and for mankind, we must study not one particular war, but as many wars as

possible, in order by comparison between them to learn what features and characteristics they have in common, whether the events which composed them happened at random, or whether they happened as they did by reason of some inherent necessity. We cannot but wish to discover whether there is not an order in the infinite variety which they exhibit. But the only basis either for a science or for an art of war is Military History, the record of the facts ascertained by methodical collection, sifting, and classification of the evidence.

The features common to all wars are that they are acts of force or violence with a political aim. They are acts of state. Apart from these common characteristics, wars differ almost infinitely one from another. The mode of action of the Greek City State in forcible conflict with a similar community or with the Persian Empire differs from that of the Roman Commonwealth, and ancient armies had little resemblance either in respect of weapons or of organization to the levies of the feudal nobles of the Middle Age. The first standing army was the beginning of the collapse of feudalism, yet it was a very different thing from the army maintained by one of the enlightened despots of the eighteenth century. As the State is, so will its army be; and the war of any age is the reflection of the political and social condition of the communities engaged in it. Weapons will embody the progress of the constructive arts and industries. Communications will be such as society has made for itself. The organization will be the expression of the community's conception of itself as a more or less organized body. Thus the determining factor is always the nature and character of the States engaged in the war; and changes in weapons, carrying with them modifications in tactics,

are but a portion of the development given to war by the development of political communities.

This cardinal principle is, so to speak, the backbone of our knowledge of the reality of war. Considerations of time compel me to illustrate it in a logical rather than a strictly historical form. The State is the organized attempt of a community to realize its conception of the best life. It will not therefore rationally engage in a war except to overcome some obstacle in the way of its realizing the purpose of its existence. Accordingly, in the ideal the whole sum of its energies will be concentrated in the struggle, and the logical process would be that so soon as the struggle was determined upon, the whole resources of the State would be mobilized for a sharp and decisive effort, the whole nation would rush to arms and move in a concentrated mass to overthrow in a single battle the equally concentrated force of the adversary, after which the successful power would take possession of the territory and the State of its defeated adversary. The conditions of such rapid and concentrated action, in which the whole energies of the State would be collected into a single blow, are the perfect organization of the nation for the pursuit of its ends and the absolute control of the community thus organized by a Government which fully represented the intelligence and will of all the citizens. This would be the character of the war of an ideal State. The cause would seem just to every citizen, whose faith in the State would inspire him with unlimited devotion to its purposes, so that as a matter of course he would be ready to sacrifice himself to them.

This conception of war was revealed in the wars

of the French Revolution and Empire. The people of France regarded themselves as having taken possession of the French State, of which roughly speaking they were in accord with the purposes, and the permanent requisition or *levée en masse* was the enunciation of the idea of the nation in arms. The grandeur of these conceptions led to an enthusiasm till then unprecedented, and to a breadth of design in the military operations which had never before been known. The military history of the nineteenth century is the history of a persistent endeavour more perfectly to realize this conception of war. First Prussia and then Germany reorganized the State with a view to attaining the utmost development of collective action in conflict with other states; and the pattern thus disclosed was inevitably adopted by the other states one after another, with success which varied according to the stage of national organization to which the several states had attained.

According to the time during which a conflict is prolonged, to the duration of the struggle with the enemy, is the extent to which it is capable of voluntary and intelligent direction during its course. A war that consisted of a long series of battles between comparatively small forces might resemble the series of thrusts and parries of a couple of skilled fencers; but the rush of a whole population into the territories of a hostile state, leading directly to a collision between two concentrated armies, tends rather to resemble some great explosion which, once the train has been laid and the match applied, admits of no further control or guidance. In proportion as war has assumed the character of a conflict between highly organized nations, and in proportion as the military intention has been to crush

and destroy the military forces of the adversary, has been the strength of the tendency to put the main work of direction, the chief effort of the guiding military intelligence, into the period of preparation preceding the actual collision. Campaigns have become shorter and more decisive, and the work of generalship has more and more shown its effectiveness in the previous elaboration of the design. Napoleon, in his great campaigns, collected almost his entire army into a single organized mass, threw it after a few days' march upon a fraction or the whole of the enemy's army, crushed that army in a single decisive battle, and then occupied the enemy's capital and dictated his terms. In the same way, Moltke, within a few days of the outbreak of war, crushed and reduced to impotence in a single battle, or in a short series of battles, the mass of the enemy's organized forces.

Thus the developments of war are the developments of the organization of society, and its increasing intensity, rapidity, and decisiveness are the results of progressive organization which more and more identifies the whole people with the State.

The wars of the French Revolution and Empire manifested an energy and a ruthlessness which had long been unknown. They represented a new type, the conflict between nationalized states. It was the achievement of Clausewitz that he first recognized this new type of war, and its origin in the new type of State which had come into existence. He asked himself whether it was merely the passing phenomenon of a day, or would reappear and persist in the future. He was driven to the conclusion that whenever national states should come into conflict in behalf of interests which the mass of their people could recognize as

vital, the war between them would resemble the wars of the French Revolution and Empire both in the energy which would be devoted to it and in the grandeur of its designs.

The experience of three-quarters of a century has confirmed the view suggested by Clausewitz that whenever a war should be the affair of a whole nation deeply stirred by the cause of quarrel, there would be devoted to it a corresponding proportion of the nation's resources, and the operations would reveal a correspondingly great and comprehensive plan. The conditions which produce the extreme energy of war, what Clausewitz called war in its absolute form, have not always accompanied all the campaigns that have been fought since he wrote. There have been conflicts in which neither side has been a nationalized State, and conflicts in which that quality could not be predicated of both sides; but where the conditions have been fulfilled, the prophecy of Clausewitz has been realized. The notable instances are the Civil War in the United States of America, the war between Prussia and Austria in 1866, and the war between Germany and France in 1870. The last great war in the Far East was a case in which one side (Japan) was a nationalized State in which the motives of the war vibrated in the spirit of every member of the community, while the adversary (Russia) was very far removed from that stage of political development in which the political purpose of the struggle could be reflected in the mind and conscience of every citizen or of every combatant. Our own struggle in South Africa was a case in which two small and uncentralized States of great territorial extent were inspired by a common determination with which the mass of their citizens were imbued. The

whole mass therefore threw itself with great determination into the conflict; but on the British side there were lacking on the part of the statesmen in the first instance that clearness of conception and that lucidity of exposition which might have brought home to the whole body of citizens the necessity and the justice of the cause, so that the national character of the war was by no means fully understood until the crisis was past. Accordingly, the nation was surprised at what happened; and both the nation and its members of all classes, both the soldiers and those who were citizens without being soldiers, received the impression that there was something in the nature of war which they had not thoroughly grasped, and which it might be desirable to understand. Those who made the attempt to penetrate beneath the surface, and to ascertain the bond between cause and effect in the events of that war, were led to believe that citizens and soldiers alike would be benefited by an abandonment of the neglect with which the subject of war had too long been treated. From the searchings of heart of that period have resulted changes in the military organization, changes in the arrangements for military education, as well as an expansion of the studies of more than one University. Thus the movement of which one of the results is our presence here to-day has been of very long and gradual growth spreading over the whole world. It has as yet hardly exercised its full pressure upon our own country, which however will be carried along in the stream of nationalizing and organizing effort until there has been created in one way or another an organization for war by land and sea of all the resources of the nation.

The tendency of war towards concentration of effort, towards the accumulation in a single decisive collision

of all the forces which a nation can accumulate, is best seen when the theatre of war is the sea. At sea a fleet can move at twenty times the rate at which an army can walk along the surface of the ground. The ships carry in them all the necessaries of life and action, so that a fleet does not, like an army, trail behind it a lengthening chain of vulnerable communications. There are in the open sea no such geographical features as enable an army to find obstacles which may serve as shelter against the enemy's attacks. At sea, therefore, the difference between attack and defence resolves itself into little more than the difference between confidence and hesitation. Accordingly, naval warfare is apt to be decided in a single battle, in which the bulk of the forces of both sides are engaged, and which, by the almost complete destruction of the force of the defeated side, determines the issues. The nation that aspires in the event of war to assert for itself the command of the sea may, therefore, have to hazard its fate upon a single battle, of which the result will in most cases have been predetermined by the character of the national efforts made during a long preceding period of preparation. The historian sees in Trafalgar and in Tsushima nothing but the inevitable consequence of the previous lives of the navies concerned.

In the modern world, when a nation—that is, a people organized as a state—goes to war, the energy developed is so great that nothing but a similarly organized body can hope to withstand the shock; and the effort involved on each side is so intense that it must for the time being absorb the whole of the national energies and carry with it a temporary suspension of all other forms of activity. The effect of war upon the State which has been successfully invaded is comparable only to that

of some great natural cataclysm. The ravages of war, even when carried on by a highly civilized and thoroughly disciplined army, resemble in their effects those of the flood or of the earthquake.

But it is a mistake to dwell too much upon the physical aspects of war. Far more important is its spiritual character, of which the significance has been increased a hundred-fold by the development of its national quality. A nation cannot be called to arms and mobilized except for the assertion of some cause which appeals to the hearts and the consciences of the mass of its citizens. For a nation, therefore, to go to war, except in behalf of a cause which makes that appeal, is to court defeat. There cannot in such a case be that sudden and tremendous development of energy without which it is idle to hope for victory. The more closely, therefore, a statesman has familiarized himself with the nature of war and the more deeply he has explored the causes of victory and defeat, the more profoundly will he be convinced that the ultimate secret of success lies in the cause in behalf of which he calls on his people to draw the sword.

But the time when causes must be scrutinized is not when a dispute has begun, when prejudices fill the air, and when passions quicken the pulses. The origin of wars lies in the conflict of policies, in the incompatibility of the purposes of two states; the time to weigh the possibilities of conflict is when the national policy is taking shape. The chief result, therefore, of the study of military history is to force us to ask the question: What is the purpose of national life, and what the specific purpose of our own nation? Oxford is the home of the doctrine that the State arises for the purpose of rendering human life possible, and that the object of

its development is to sustain a noble life in which its citizens shall be sharers. A noble life is a life of service to the community, and a great nation is one that serves the other nations of mankind. We have learned each for himself from a great leader of war that England expects every man to do his duty. Let us learn also, when called upon in our capacity as citizens to consider the national policy, to say to ourselves that Englishmen expect England to do her duty.

I have dwelt at perhaps too much length upon the main truths disclosed by military history as to the nature of war, partly because I think that too little attention has been paid to them, and partly because I derive from them my conception of the scope and method of the University study of war. The Statute prescribes that the Professor shall lecture and give instruction in military history, with special reference to the conditions of modern warfare. In the matter of warfare, the modern epoch begins in 1792 with the first appearance of the nation in the field. The period to which we must devote special attention is from 1792, to the latest date up to which the publication or the accessibility of sufficient evidence enables us to obtain accurate knowledge and to form a trustworthy judgement of the events. The area thus given for our exploration is considerable. It includes a number of wars of the first magnitude, and a number of leaders of considerable power—several of them stars of the first magnitude. I confess that I am specially attracted by the two greatest of them, by Napoleon and Moltke—by Napoleon, because he was the originator of modern methods as well as the greatest master of the art; by Moltke, because he inherited and developed the tradition of the Napoleonic age, transforming and applying to conditions in many respects

new the ideas developed in the earlier period. The researches of the last thirty years have thrown a new light upon the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and it seems prudent to begin by the attempt to appreciate those wars by the aid of the now available mass of evidence. My own special endeavour has been for some years to trace the genesis of Napoleon's generalship from his early studies, from the environment in which he grew up, and from the teaching which he inherited, in order to arrive at an historical understanding of the rise of modern strategy; and I hope that some of my students will be able to associate themselves with me in that attempt.

There are three processes involved in the work of the military historian. The first is the kind of criticism which is here taught in the schools of History, the sifting of the evidence with a view to the establishment of the facts. This is, and always must be, the basis of all our work, for without it we shall be dealing not with reality but with dreams. History resembles Antaeus, who lost his strength when lifted out of contact with the earth on which he walked—in the case of history the facts as established by evidence.

The second process consists in the application of the military judgement. It is the attempt to arrange the facts in their connexion of cause and effect, and requires us to trace the course of the events with sufficient minuteness to make sure so far as may be that we know the intentions and the motives of the chief actors. It is perhaps not the historian's business to distribute praise and blame, but it may be his function to inquire upon occasion whether the means employed were those most suitable to produce the result desired. This is the third process, of which you may like to have an illustration.

In 1797 Napoleon, who in the previous year had driven the Austrian armies from the north of Italy and made himself master of the plain from the Alps to the Ticino and of the hills as far north as the Brenner, set out with such forces as he could collect to advance on the line from Verona to Vienna. The Austrian Government saw itself compelled to withdraw for the defence of Vienna the portion of its forces which was facing the French armies in South Germany, and with which, in 1796, the Archduke Charles had brilliantly defeated those armies. The Archduke Charles collected a small army in the north-east of Italy at the foot of the mountains which interposed between the Italian plain and the plain of Austria-Hungary. He put himself as well as he could between Napoleon and his objective. The first critical historian of this war, Jomini, expressed the opinion that the Archduke Charles would have done better if he had collected his army in the Tyrol and thereby compelled Napoleon to turn to his left rather than go straight on. The next great critic, Clausewitz, was unwilling to disapprove of the action of a commander previously so prudent and able as the Archduke Charles. He therefore speculated on the reasons which might have induced the Archduke to follow the course which he actually adopted, and these speculations will always be worth studying because they reveal the breadth and the strength of the judgement of one of the greatest of all critics. Clausewitz had no means of knowing, and was aware that he had no means of knowing, the principal fact, namely, the real ideas and intentions of the Archduke. Many years after the death of Clausewitz were published the military memoirs of the Archduke, who in them discussed this question. After

reviewing the situation at the opening of the campaign, he says: 'To all these unfavourable circumstances were further added the erroneous views of the Archduke Charles, who was recalled from the Rhine and replaced at the head of the troops in Italy, and whose mind was too much dominated by old-fashioned ideas. . . . Accordingly, he took up a quite unsuitable, mistaken position, leaving only a small force in Tyrol, and collecting the greater part on the Tagliamento.'

In this kind of inquiry the military judgement is formed, and it may be found useful for the student from time to time to give it further exercise by attempting in the imagination an independent solution of the problems with which generals in the past have been confronted. For the conclusion that a particular operation was not the most appropriate for the end in view cannot be demonstrated except by an exposition of a more appropriate means, and by the examination of what would have been the probable results of its employment.

I think it would be in accordance with the spirit of the Statute that I should from time to time, as opportunity offers, try to show for the benefit of historical students not directly concerned with military history, the way in which the modern knowledge of war throws light on some of the obscure problems with which historians sometimes deal. I hope, for example, at no very distant date, to discuss in the light of modern military research the problem, sometimes thought insoluble, of Hannibal's passage across the Alps.

I do not conceive it to be the function of the University to undertake the technical instruction of professional officers, or to give its students practice in the art of leading troops. Yet the University may well be of some use to those who have charge of the

management of the army. If our work is rightly carried on, we may throw some light upon aspects of war with which the professional soldier has not always time to occupy himself; and we shall hope to derive help and guidance from the historical and other scientific labours carried on by the general staff at the War Office. The greatest services, however, which the University can render to the army, as to the nation, must consist in the effort which we carry on to obtain and to communicate true ideas of human life and society, and in the inspiration which we may be able to give to our students. If we are able to send out into the working life of England a stream of men of sound intellectual training, with a large outlook on life and a high purpose of service to the nation, it is for the army to attract them to the particular career which it has to offer.

The ultimate outcome of the activity of the military historian is the insight which he gains into the nature of war, and which he may attempt to express in a view or theory of its nature and of its several parts or manifestations. I doubt whether there has been in recent times an English view of war. English students for the most part have accepted the theory set forth either by Jomini, the head of the French school, or by Clausewitz, the founder after Scharnhorst of the German school. To some, these two views have seemed to be inconsistent with one another, and there have been those who have tried, both in discussion and in action, to defend one theory against the other, very much as those politicians whose thinking is divorced from history imagine the State to be the *corpus vile* upon which experiments may be made concerning the results of particular abstract theories. More than three-quarters of a century have passed since Jomini and Clausewitz gave to the world

such insight as they had acquired during a generation of war into its nature and workings. In my view, the subsequent experience reconciles and confirms them both, and I have often thought it possible that the continuance of their labours might well be the work of some English hand. To-day, I cannot but dream of an Oxford School of War developing that which time has confirmed of the ideas of the older writers into a fresh yet true idea adequate to the needs of the present day and of our own people. It would attempt to be a vision and not a dream, and would base itself upon such knowledge as Oxford can supply of the nature of society and of the State.

I may perhaps venture, in illustration of my fancy, to touch upon one point where I suspect that the ideas of the German thinkers are open to discussion. From the evident necessity for harmony between policy and strategy they deduce the conclusion that it is desirable that the political and the strategical direction of the State should be in a single hand. That doctrine seems to me to lend itself to a possible inversion of the true relations between the two activities. A strategist in supreme authority may easily underrate the magnitude of those ethical laws which manifest themselves in the life of nations. Is there not a contrast to be drawn between Napoleon and Moltke? The more we study the conduct of Napoleon's campaigns, the more we must admire his splendid insight into the laws of force. Yet is it not clear that he was blind to some of the laws of spiritual and national life, and is it not the conflict between his insight and his blindness which invests the story of his catastrophe with something of the awe of tragedy? The work of Moltke may have been less brilliant, but his victories have certainly had more durable results, and his serene end recalls the ancient saying

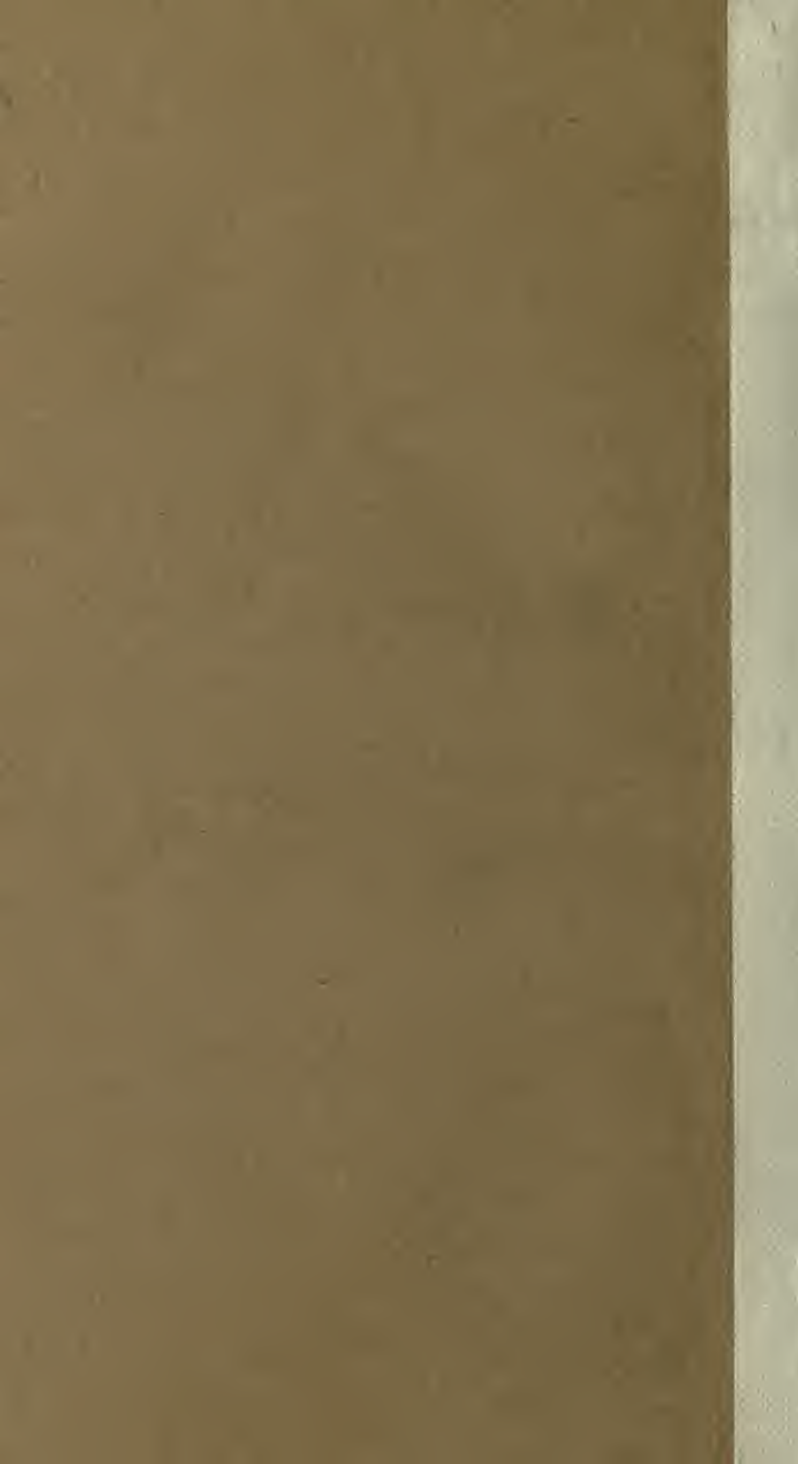
that we must estimate no man's happiness until his career is over. Now Moltke was not, as Napoleon was, the master of his State. His strategical genius was not the dictator, but the obedient servant of his country. Perhaps the deepest secret of his career is to be found in the words inscribed on the little chapel which he erected in the grounds of his Silesian country house as a monument to what was dearest to him—the words 'Love is the fulfilling of the law'.

Permit me now, in conclusion, to collect into a focus the thought which I have been trying to express. My purpose has been to set before you a true idea of war, that being the end and aim of my presence in the University as Professor of Military History. A true idea is like a living thing that grows from a small seed, and its peculiar quality is that from the beginning to the end of its growth it remains the same, developing from an original kernel to a great and complicated organism. The true idea of war is that it is a social effort, a form of the struggle of a society for self-realization, its peculiar form being that of violent conflict with another society, its rival or enemy. This way of looking at war gives the clue to all the phenomena observed in the history of innumerable wars. It accounts for changes and developments in the organization of combatant forces, in their armament and administration, in their tactics, and in the mechanism of their command and control. From this point of view we are able to understand the relation between the statesman and the naval or military commander, and to grasp the necessity of modifications of military systems in accordance with the metamorphoses which the State itself undergoes.

Applying this simple idea to the well-known facts of

modern history, we have seen how the transformation of the State which marked the close of the eighteenth century, the transition from the monarchical to the democratic organization, brought with it the possibility of a great expansion of the energies and resources available for conflict. Once that possibility had been revealed in action the several states found themselves in turn compelled to reckon with it, until the modern State, of which the general character is that of a whole people organized for political purposes, or, as we say in a single word, a nation, has tended to become, for that kind of self-realization which we know as war, a nation in arms. This idea of the nature of war I have put before you as the essence of the teaching of that military history which is identical with the science of war. If it is a true idea it ought to explain all the phenomena, great and small. I have therefore applied it in the explanation of the beginnings of military studies at Oxford; and that inquiry has shown, I trust to your satisfaction, that our University is, in this as in other branches, consciously or unconsciously doing work in the service of our country of which, though the fruits are not yet seen, the character and quality may be divined.

I have suggested that the development of the national organization is bound by the conditions of the world to adapt itself in some measure to the needs of ever-possible conflict, so that our nation must and will find its mode of constituting itself as a fighting power. In that development Oxford will have her part, which I imagine must be, according to the nature of her activities, to cultivate, develop, and diffuse the true idea of the nature of war.



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